















# City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan

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# Legislative History of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan was first adopted on July 25, 1994, by Ordinance 117221.

## Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Adoption Date	Ordinance Number	Nature of Amendments
12/12/94	117436	1994 Capital Improvement Program
7/31/95	117735	1995 Comprehensive Plan amendments
11/27/95	117906	Adoption of a new Human Development Element
11/27/95	117915	1995 Six-Year CIP amendments
7/01/96	118197	Response to 4/2/96 Growth Management Hearings Board remand. Repealed policy L-127 of Ord. 117735
9/23/96	118408	Addition of Shoreline Master Program to Plan
11/18/96	118388	1996 CIP amendments
11/18/96	118389	1996 annual amendments
6/16/97	118622	Policies for the reuse of Sand Point Naval Station
9/8/97	118722	Response to 3/97 GMHB remand
11/13/97	118820	1997 Six-Year CIP amendments
11/13/97	118821	1997 annual amendments; addition of Cultural Resources element
6/22/98	119047	Adoption of the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing/Industrial Center neighborhood plan
8/17/98	119111	Adoption of the Crown Hill/Ballard neighborhood plan
10/26/98	119207	1998 annual amendments
11/02/98	119217	Adoption of the Wallingford neighborhood plan
11/02/98	119216	Adoption of the Central Area neighborhood plan
11/16/98	119231	Adoption of the Pioneer Square neighborhood plan
11/16/98	119230	Adoption of the University neighborhood plan
11/23/98	119264	1998 Six-Year CIP amendments
12/07/98	119322	Adoption of the Eastlake neighborhood plan
12/14/98	119298	Adoption of the MLK@Holly neighborhood plan
12/14/98	119297	Adoption of the Chinatown/International District neighborhood plan
1/25/99	119356	Adoption of the South Park neighborhood plan
2/08/99	119365	Adoption of the Denny Triangle neighborhood plan
3/15/99	119401	Adoption of the South Lake Union neighborhood plan
3/15/99	119403	Adoption of the Queen Anne neighborhood plan
3/22/99	119413	Adoption of the Pike/Pine neighborhood plan
3/22/99	119412	Adoption of the First Hill neighborhood plan
5/10/99	119464	Adoption of the Belltown neighborhood plan
5/24/99	119475	Adoption of the Commercial Core neighborhood plan
6/07/99	119498	Adoption of the Capitol Hill neighborhood plan
7/06/99	119524	Adoption of the Green Lake neighborhood plan
7/06/99	119525	Adoption of the Roosevelt neighborhood plan
7/09/99	119538	Adoption of the Aurora Licton neighborhood plan
7/21/99	119506	Adoption of the West Seattle Junction neighborhood plan
8/23/99	119615	Adoption of the Westwood/Highland Park neighborhood plan



Adoption Date	Ordinance Number	Nature of Amendments
8/23/99	119614	Adoption of the Rainier Beach neighborhood plan
9/07/99	119633	Adoption of the North Neighborhoods neighborhood plan
9/07/99	119634	Adoption of the Morgan Junction neighborhood plan
9/27/99	119671	Adoption of the North Rainier neighborhood plan
10/04/99	119685	Adoption of the Broadview/Bitter Lake/Haller Lake neighborhood plan
10/04/99	119687	Adoption of the Fremont neighborhood plan
10/11/99	119694	Adoption of the Columbia City neighborhood plan
10/25/99	119713	Adoption of the North Beacon Hill neighborhood plan
10/25/99	119714	Adoption of the Admiral neighborhood plan
11/15/99	119743	Adoption of the Greenwood/Phinney Ridge neighborhood plan
11/15/99	119744	1999 annual amendments
11/22/99	119760	1999 Six-Year CIP amendments
12/06/99	119789	Adoption of the Delridge neighborhood plan
2/07/00	119852	Adoption of the Georgetown neighborhood plan
6/12/00	119973	Adoption of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center neighborhood plan
11/13/00	120158	Response to Growth Management Hearings Board remand; Greenwood/Phinney Ridge neighborhood plan
12/11/00	120201	2000 five-year Comprehensive Plan review amendments
10/15/01	120563	2001 annual amendments
12/09/02	121020	2002 annual amendments
12/13/04	121701	2004 10-year Update to Comprehensive Plan
10/10/05	121955	2005 Annual Amendments

**Resolutions Related to Vision for City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan**

Passage Date	Resolution	Nature of Legislation
7/25/94	28962	1994 Vision for the Comprehensive Plan
11/27/95	29215	Updated 1994 Vision to reflect addition of Human Development element in Comprehensive Plan (Ord. 117906)
12/11/00	30252	Updated Vision to reflect Cultural Resources and Environment elements and adoption of neighborhood plans
12/13/04	30727	Updated Vision in conjunction with the 2004 10-year Update to the Comprehensive Plan



# Vision for the Comprehensive Plan

## A

### Introducing Seattle's Comprehensive Plan

The City of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, *Toward a Sustainable Seattle*, is a 20-year policy plan (1994-2014) designed to articulate a vision of how Seattle will grow in ways that sustain its citizens' values. The Comprehensive Plan makes basic policy choices and provides a flexible framework for adapting to real conditions over time. The initial building blocks of the Comprehensive Plan are the "elements" required by the state's Growth Management Act: land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities and utilities. King County's Countywide Planning Policies require the addition of an economic development element, and the Seattle Framework Policies (Resolution 28535) inspired the inclusion of a neighborhood planning element when the Plan was first adopted in 1994. The Framework Policies also inspired the later additions of a Human Development element and an Environmental element to the Plan. The ideas in the plan were developed over five years through discussion and debate and the creative thinking of thousands of Seattle citizens working with City staff and elected officials.

## B

### The Vision

#### Seattle's community values

From the beginning of the planning process, discussion among Seattleites focused on defining the future in terms of the values we hold most closely. Choices among policy directions and the weighing of priorities have been made on the basis of publicly expressed values.

Basic values that Seattleites defined in discussions about the Framework Policies serve as the basis for the policies in the Plan and are listed below. What the Plan must maintain and enhance over time to be true to its citizens' visions are:

- Continuity
- Freedom
- Diversity
- Good Government
- Economic Security
- Opportunity
- Education and Life Long Learning
- Health and Safety
- Environmental Quality
- Progress

From the many discussions and debates that contributed to the development of the Comprehensive Plan, a simple set of four values — Seattle's core values — has emerged. These core values are:

- **Community**
- **Environmental Stewardship**
- **Economic Opportunity and Security**
- **Social Equity**

These core values are the fundamental principles that guide the Comprehensive Plan and the ultimate measure of its success or failure.

**Community**

Seattleites understand that the health of the city and of the whole region depends on the strength of community within and between neighborhoods and across city and county boundaries. We are all in this place together. Seattleites share pride in the community fabric of Seattle's neighborhoods and the diversity of its people. At the neighborhood level, residents and business people experience the greatest sense of belonging to a community.

The City will facilitate and support a strong sense of community within neighborhoods. The City will strive to support people of all ages, and ethnic, economic or social groups in finding a sense of belonging and ownership, accessing needed services, and connecting with other people. The plan anticipates that residents, community organizations, institutions and business people will collaborate with the City to find acceptable, desirable and innovative ways to achieve Seattle's goals through neighborhood planning processes. At the same time, through its actions the City will strive to strengthen a sense of community among people throughout the city and will be a leader in efforts to build broad support for economic, environmental and social community in the region.

**Environmental Stewardship**

The natural and built environments are precious resources that should be preserved, protected and enhanced. The Comprehensive Plan calls for Seattle to continue to be a national leader in environmental stewardship. The City will strive to:

- protect and improve the quality of the global and local environments;
- maintain and enhance conditions necessary to a healthy environment;
- manage the City's built environment so as to limit its impact on natural resources and to responsibly steward public investment;

- act as a role model for individuals and businesses in environmental management and preservation practices;
- help all citizens to become environmental stewards; and
- improve the overall quality of life in Seattle.

This Comprehensive Plan tries to address some of the Seattle area's broad environmental problems. For example, the Plan's urban villages concept addresses a number of environmental concerns. The urban village concept promotes compact, more pedestrian-oriented development and alternative (non-auto) transportation choices such as transit, as well as incentive and disincentive programs to encourage getting around without a car. The emphasis on compact development is intended to mitigate air and stormwater discharge pollution from automobiles, loss of green space, and increases in impervious surfaces that results from non-compact development.

The emphasis on affordable housing and neighborhood planning assumes that if citizens have access to affordable housing inside the urban area and can find employment and shopping in their neighborhoods, the need to travel by car is less frequent. Each of these aspects of the Plan helps to conserve natural areas, open space and wildlife habitat. The Plan also recognizes that by focusing on conservation of both water and energy, the City can control impacts from two major activities of City government – supplying water and power to significant portions of the region.

For recently recognized environmental issues, such as global climate change and loss of Chinook salmon, the City can be a leader in its own practices and activities, as well as being a regulator, educator, catalyst and advocate. The Plan also addresses these issues.



Changing our actions to protect the environment should be the foundation for further initiatives. The City will work with residents, employees, businesses, institutions and neighboring jurisdictions to strive for improvement in the quality of the city's and region's air, water, soils and built environment, and for increases in preserved open space and reductions in noise levels. Individuals, industries and businesses will be encouraged to employ sound environmental practices. Successes in changing our ways to those that protect the environment will be the foundation for further environmental protection efforts. Recent successes include reducing waste, recycling, reducing use of hazardous materials, conserving energy and water, walking, bicycling, carpooling and using public transit, and using sustainable design practices, historic preservation and design review.

### **Economic Opportunity and Security**

Citizens of Seattle want themselves, their children and others living in the city to enjoy the benefit of a healthy economy. They wish to ensure the continuation of economic opportunity and security of livelihood in a manner that balances these benefits with full realization of other values. A strong economy is fundamental to maintaining the quality of life in Seattle in order that individuals may meet their basic needs for food and shelter, health care and education, and that government may generate the resources necessary to support public investment and amenities and to help people who need assistance.

The City will look for ways to enhance the region's economic prosperity and will accommodate a reasonable share of the region's economic growth. This is intended to increase opportunity and equity for the city's distressed communities, raise personal incomes, and increase tax revenues. The City will actively promote Seattle's involvement in the global economy by creating a positive environment for international trade. The City will actively promote an employment environment that provides livable wage jobs and the education and skill-building opportunities to ensure employability for all community members.

### **Social Equity**

Seattleites recognize that resources and opportunities are not limitless and must be shared among all members of the community. Seattle citizens seek greater equity in the opportunity to benefit from, participate in and contribute to the life of the community.

In order to promote equality, justice and understanding, the City will not tolerate discrimination in employment or housing on the basis of race, color, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, political ideology, creed, religion, ancestry, national origin or the presence of any sensory, mental or physical disability. The City will aim for a more equitable society than existed in 1994.

The City will endeavor to ensure that its citizens have the education, skills and opportunity to participate in and benefit from economic growth. Special attention will be directed to residents of distressed communities, where incomes, educational levels, skill levels and labor force participation rates are lower than average. Special attention will also be provided to economically distressed communities to ensure that the quality of infrastructure and services are provided to support economic viability and a sense of high quality of living in all parts of the city.

Seattle's future depends on the skills, strength and vitality of all its people. City building involves people's increased involvement in and connection to the community; more supportive families and healthier children; increased access to health care and services; a more skilled and capable workforce; and increased safety in homes, neighborhoods and streets. The City will encourage Seattleites to better understand one another and to create urban environments that work for people. The community must work together toward reducing poverty and creating opportunities for all people, and assisting those in the population who are most vulnerable.



## toward a sustainable Seattle

A Native American proverb reminds us that "Every decision must take into account its effect on the next seven generations." Sustainability refers to the long-term social, economic and environmental health of our community. A sustainable culture thrives without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Seattle's commitment to sustainability is supported by this Plan. Sustainable cities use resources efficiently and effectively. They reuse and recycle. They recognize constraints and build on assets. They use existing local resources where they can. They minimize exportation of environmental risk. They provide physical and economic security, and they distribute these and other benefits evenly. They balance the need for growth with the needs for stability and prudent use of resources.

The Plan's four core values — community, environmental stewardship, economic opportunity and security, and social equity — are key components of sustainability. Separately, they are necessary but insufficient; taken together they become a solid foundation upon which to build a sustainable future for ourselves and the generations to follow.

## the urban village strategy

The goal that unifies all the elements of the Comprehensive Plan is to preserve the best qualities of Seattle's distinct neighborhoods while responding positively and creatively to the pressures of change and growth. A key component of the City's plan to achieve this goal is the urban village strategy.

The urban village strategy combines small changes in the city's development pattern with a more complete and competitive intermodal public transportation system; the targeted use of housing assistance funds and planning tools to provide desirable and affordable housing; investment in facilities and service delivery systems designed to serve higher density neighborhoods; and neighborhood-based decisions built upon local citizens' expressed priorities.

Seattle will strive to develop and enhance these qualities of urban villages, including:

- a diverse mix of people of varied ages, incomes, cultures, employment, and interests;
- vibrant, pedestrian-oriented commercial areas with stores, services and, in certain villages, employment;
- a variety of housing types, ranging appropriately for each village scale to meet the needs and preferences of the diverse community;
- a strong relationship between residential and commercial areas;
- community facilities, including schools, community and recreation centers, libraries, parks, and human services, within walking distance of the village core;
- partnerships with neighborhood and community-based organizations to improve people's access to services and activities and to create opportunities for interaction through such means as neighborhood planning and community policing;
- transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities with connections to neighboring villages, good circulation within the village and between the village and surrounding neighborhoods;
- well-integrated public open space, providing recreational opportunities for village residents and workers;
- a unique identity reflecting local history, the village's natural features, its culture and other sources of community pride.





## a city for families

In addition to being the primary employment center of the region, Seattle will continue to be a residential city and will remain home to a wide variety of people. As the region's population grows, Seattle will continue to welcome newcomers and ensure that our community's children can choose to make their future home here as adults.

The City will make special efforts to keep Seattle attractive for children and their families. These efforts will have the benefit of also making the community attractive to households without children. In order to attract and retain households with children:

- The City will support neighborhoods that provide a range of commercial, cultural, educational and recreational services, and that can be easily and safely traversed on foot or by bicycle;
- The City will support increased opportunities for households with young children to secure suitable housing with yards and play areas adjacent to their homes, whether they seek to rent or buy;
- The City will encourage the development of a variety of multifamily housing types with features attractive to households with children;
- The City will use the institutional and political resources at its disposal to ensure excellent education for all students in the Seattle Public Schools as well as in private schools, institutions of higher education, and educational facilities throughout the community. The quality of education is a critical factor in retaining households with children in the city. Schools and libraries are significant institutions for children, youth and their families in teaching social skills and critical thinking, promoting life-long learning, and serving as significant resources for the local community.

## C

## Getting There from Here

The Plan is intended to manage growth and change in Seattle for the next 20 years. The future described in the Plan cannot be achieved all at once.

Over the life of the Plan, growth likely will occur more slowly at times, more rapidly at others, and in somewhat different patterns and sequences than is currently foreseen. The best a plan can be is a well-educated guess about how to accommodate people and conditions that cannot be known in advance. An effective plan must be flexible enough to succeed within a range of likely conditions and be adjusted as those conditions are monitored and evaluated, while maintaining a steady aim at its ultimate goals.

Through the urban village strategy, the Plan intends to achieve goals that are shaped by the core values. The Plan's flexibility comes from the mechanisms that permit its adaptation to needs as they arise from the real experience of the next 20 years. The following mechanisms will help translate the Plan's policies into City actions.

**Neighborhood Planning** that followed the adoption of this plan produced amendments that tailor the plan's citywide perspective to individual urban and manufacturing centers, villages and neighborhoods. Neighborhood plans are expected to continue to aid in adjusting and fine-tuning the plan over time.

**Coordination with Other Jurisdictions** is occurring through regional planning processes. Seattle representatives have participated with King County, suburban cities and Puget Sound Regional Council representatives. Many regional issues have been addressed sketchily. Many others have been identified for future discussion. Undoubtedly, continued regional planning forums will be needed to meet the Growth Management Act's challenge for regional action toward creating, implementing and funding a shared vision.



**Regulations** have been and will be adopted when necessary to conform to the policies in this Plan.

**A Strategic Investment Strategy** will describe a framework for making resource allocation decisions in an environment where wants and needs always exceed the finite resources available. Tradeoffs among many possible investment choices will be made to achieve the Plan's goals. The framework will add dimension to the Plan's goals by enabling them to be addressed over time.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** will be done periodically to assess progress toward achieving Comprehensive Plan goals as well as to measure conditions and changes occurring in the city. Monitoring and evaluation will help ensure consistency within and among the Plan elements as well as with the Growth Management Act and county and regional growth plans. Monitoring and evaluation will lead to both Plan amendments and improved ability to project future conditions. The Seattle Planning Commission will assist the Mayor and the City Council in monitoring and evaluation of the Plan and will advise them as to any needed amendments to the Plan.

**Citizen Participation** in City processes will build upon the dialogue between government and citizens that began with the development and adoption of the Plan. The City will strive to find improved means to communicate with and involve citizens in planning and decision-making. The City will strive to provide information that can be easily understood and to provide access for public involvement. This will include processes for amending and implementing the Plan.



## Application of the Comprehensive Plan

The principal purpose of this Comprehensive Plan is to provide policies that guide the development of the City in the context of regional growth management. These policies can be looked to by citizens and by all levels of government in planning for growth. Specifically, the Plan will be used by the City of Seattle to help make decisions about proposed ordinances, policies and programs. Although the Plan will be used to direct the development of regulations which govern land use and development, the Plan will not be used to review applications for specific development projects except when reference to this Comprehensive Plan is expressly required by an applicable development regulation.

The Plan format generally presents a Plan "goal," followed by "policies" related to the goal, and may include a "discussion" about the goals and policies. Each of these components is defined as follows:

**Goals** represent the results that the City hopes to realize over time, perhaps within the 20-year life of the Plan, except where interim time periods are stated. Whether expressed in terms of numbers or only as directions for future change, goals are not guarantees or mandates.

**Policies** should be read as if preceded by the words "it is the City's general policy to..." A policy helps to guide the creation or change of specific rules or strategies (such as development regulations, budgets or program area plans). City officials will generally make decisions on specific City actions by following ordinances, resolutions, budgets or program area plans that themselves reflect relevant Plan policies, rather than by referring directly to this Plan. Implementation of most policies involves a range of City actions over time, so one cannot simply ask whether a specific action or project would fulfill a particular Plan policy. For example, a policy that the City will "give priority to" a particular need indicates that need will be treated as important, not that it will take precedence in every City decision.

Some policies use the words "shall" or "should," "ensure" or "encourage," and so forth. In general, such words should be read to describe the relative degree of emphasis that the policy imparts, but not necessarily to establish a specific legal duty to perform a particular act, to undertake a program or project, or to achieve a specific result. Whether such a result is intended must be determined by reading the policy as a whole and by examining the context of other related policies in the Plan.

Some policies may appear to conflict, particularly in the context of a specific fact situation or viewed from the different perspectives of persons whose interests may conflict on a given issue. A classic example is the oft-referenced "conflict" between policies calling for "preservation of the environment" and policies that "promote economic development." Because Plan policies do not exist in isolation, and must be viewed in the context of all potentially relevant policies, it is largely in the application of those policies that the interests which they embody are reconciled and balanced by the legislative and executive branches of City government.

Before this Plan was adopted, the City of Seattle had many policies in place which were approved over the course of many years, and which affect the full range of programs and services provided by the City. To the extent a conflict may arise between such a policy and this Plan, the Plan will generally prevail, except that policies that are used in the application of existing development regulations shall continue to be used until those regulations are made consistent with the Plan pursuant to RCW 36.70A.040.

**Discussion** is provided to explain the context in which decisions on goals and policies have been made, the reasons for those decisions, and how the goals and policies are related. The discussion portions of the Plan do not establish or modify policies, but they may help to interpret policies.



**Appendices** to the Plan contain certain required maps, inventories and other information required by the GMA, and in some cases further data and discussion or analysis. The appendices are not to be read as establishing or modifying policies or requirements unless specified for such purposes in the Plan policies. For example, descriptions of current programs in an appendix do not require that the same program be continued, and detailed estimates of how the City may expect to achieve certain goals do not establish additional goals or requirements.